Allandale Neighbor

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Are Sound Walls a sound idea for Great Northern?

Tom Linehan and Michael Nink

There has been quite a debate on the Allandale Listserv about whether a sound wall along Great Northern Boulevard would be a good thing. I assumed that those living closest to MoPac and the tracks would want the sound wall, and that everyone else probably would not care. It turns out that a number of people in the neighborhood do care and are opposed to a sound wall going up along Great Northern. They question its effectiveness in masking the noise from MoPac and do not like having the trees on Great Northern replaced with a 20-foot wall that will block light, the view, and the cross breeze. A few people posting to the Listserv added that they like the sound of the train.

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Re-Opening of the Northwest Recreation Center

Gloria Mata Pennington

Following are remarks made by Gloria Pennington at the Northwest Recreation Center Ribbon Cutting Ceremony held on July 9, 2011. Gloria is the historian for Austin Parks and Recreation, and a former ANA President.

In December of 1979, this community received a wonderful Christmas gift, with the opening of a long-awaited recreation center. It was touted as the first recreation center for "far Northwest Austin" and now, thirty-two years later, we have become Central Austin. The ribbon cutting on December 20 was done by Mayor Carol Keeton Rylander joined by several other Council Members and some neighborhood children.

Donna Beth McCormick and Cynthia Keohane - at Northwest Recreation Center grand re-opening

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HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

The next ANA EC Meeting is September 22, 6:30 p.m., Covenant Hall, Covenant Presbyterian Church. The meeting is open to the public.

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EDITOR Tom Linehan

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allandaleads@gmail.com

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CONTACT INFORMATION
Allandale Neighbor,
PO Box 10886, Austin, TX 78766-1886
allandaleneighbor@gmail.com

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ANA General Meetings are held March and September on the fourth Thursday.

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Officer Gary Griffin, 974-8392,
gary.griffin@ci.austin.tx.us
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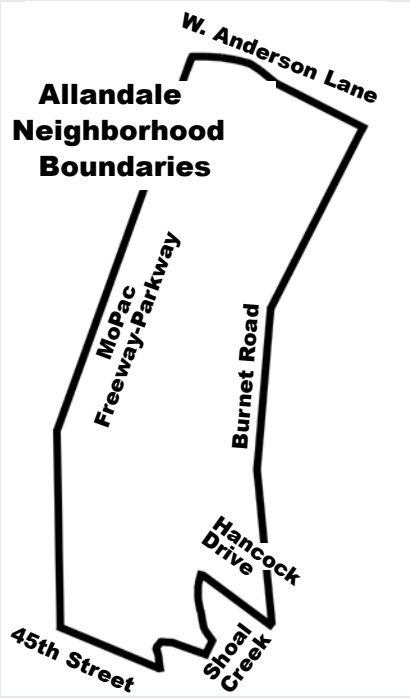
Rolando.Gutierrez@ci.austin.tx.us



ANA President's Letter

Cynthia Keohane

A huge thanks to all who made Allandale's 52nd Fourth of July Parade a huge success.

The grand reopening ceremony at Northwest Recreation Center was a festive event featuring refreshments from Upper Crust. Although I expected to be just part of the audience, I was pleased to be invited to be a ribbon cutter. And several local TV stations interviewed both me and Donna Beth McCormick, ANA's immediate past president.

The Recreation Center looks great. Donna Beth has already booked our ANA board and general meetings there for October 2011 through September 2012. Thanks, DB!

Our June newsletter contained Steven Zettner's article, "Austin's Comprehensive Plan to Place 20,000 New Residences, Jobs on Anderson Lane." Since then, we have sent a joint letter from the Allandale and North Shoal Creek neighborhood associations to Austin Comprehensive Plan staff. We are in discussion with staff. ❖

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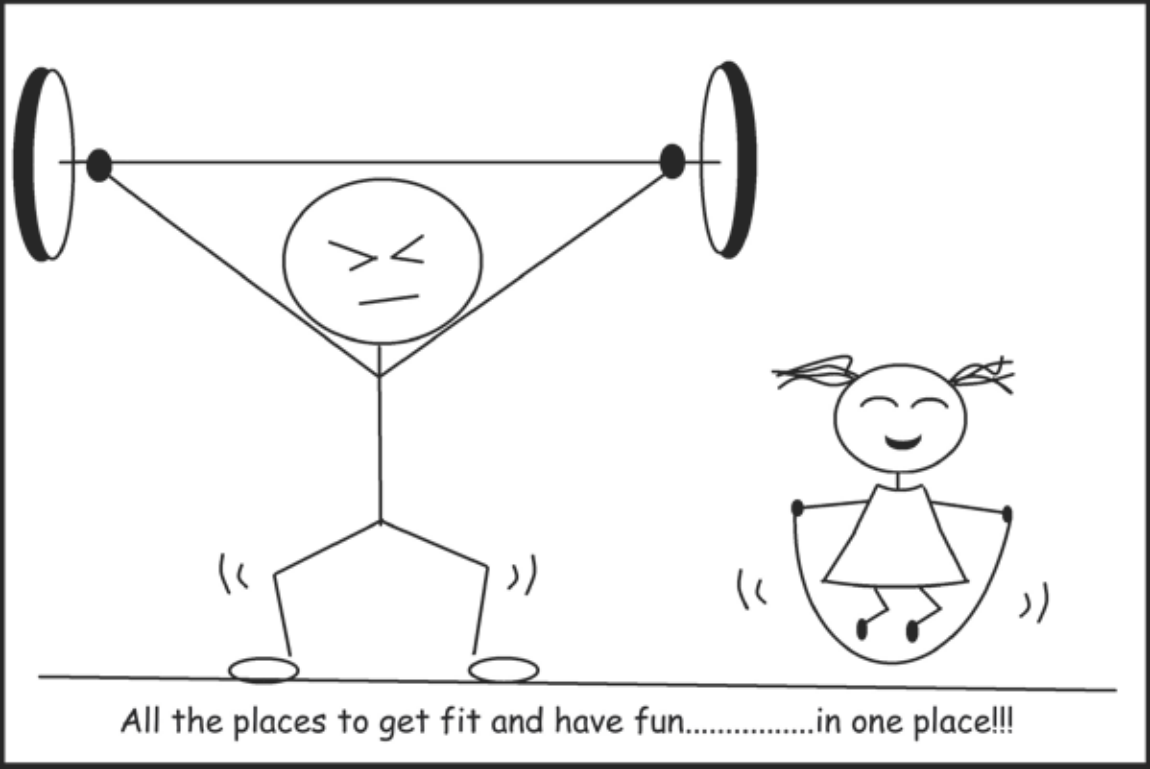

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Are Sound Walls a sound idea for Great Northern?

Continued from front page

What I gather, however, is that some of the people opposed to the sound wall are not the people who live next to MoPac. They live in Allandale and ride their bikes and/or walk and drive Great Northern, which should entitle them to a say in the matter. The counter-argument expressed in an email to the neighborhood association, is "these people are being insensitive to those that live close to the railroad tracks and that just because a person jogs or bikes down Great Northern does not make them aware of the noise problems of the people living next to it."

By way of background, sound walls are part of the Environmental Study phase of the MoPac Improvement Project. The MoPac Improvement Project, according to the project overview on its website, www.mopacexpress.com, "is a combined effort from the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), the City of Austin, and Capital Metro to address traffic congestion on the 11-mile stretch of MoPac between Parmer Lane and Cesar Chavez Street."

Five open houses to look at the entire project have been held since July 2010, including one at Gullett Elementary on May 26. A second meeting was held at Gullett on July 28, one of seven sound wall workshops, to provide background information about sound walls including results of noise studies, proposed location for the sound walls, and height of the walls. The Project Team had previously mailed letters to property owners adjacent to the proposed walls ("the benefitted property owners"), notifying them about the workshops. The first row property owners are the ones who get to vote on the walls. If a majority of these property owners vote for the wall, the wall will be included in the submission to the City Council and to the Federal Highway Administration for approval. They have until Monday August 29, 2011, to submit their ballots. As it stands, people who live in the neighborhood but who are not one of the benefitted property owners do not get a vote.

Current Photo of Great Northern Boulevard heading south

What follows is a summary of what was learned from the July 28 meeting, a version of which was posted to the Allandale Listserv the day after the meeting by Allandale resident Michael Nink. I have supplemented his notes with some additional information I have since gathered. The summary addresses some of

Conceptual drawing of sound wall along Great Northern Boulevard

the common questions about the proposed sound walls.

The wall height is going to vary between eight and 20 feet high. 100% of Great Northern from Far West Boulevard to Foster Lane will be a 20-foot wall; Far West to White Rock Drive will vary from 20 feet to 18 feet to 16 feet, etc. Close to White Rock the height decreases to eight to 12 feet for those homes that back directly up to the railroad south of White Rock. A 20-foot wall is a tall wall.

Someone suggested that the money for the sound wall should be spent on sound-proofing the homes nearest MoPac instead of paying for a sound wall, because that would be a more cost-efficient approach to addressing the noise problem. This is not an option. The MoPac Improvement Project is a federal program and it must adhere to federal guidelines for Texas which exclude using sound proofing single family homes as an option. To try and change it would involve changing Federal Highway Administration guidelines.

The stretch of MoPac being considered for sound walls is broken into segments, and the Great Northern stretch constitutes two segments. The outcome of the vote on one segment could be different than the one on the other segment. That means that the neighborhood could end up having a half of a sound wall. Michael asked if that could happen and was told by a representative from the City that the city staff recommendation to the Council would mirror the results of the vote, but after that it was up to the Council as to whether they would follow that recommendation.

The railroad tracks along Great Northern are at a higher elevation than the road for most of the stretch in question, and MoPac is even higher. This is why the wall is so high – it is being built solely to diffuse the noise from MoPac and not the railroad.

A key criteria for determining whether to build a sound wall at a given location is whether it provides a maximum cost per benefit to the receiver of $25,000. A benefited receiver is anyone who will have a five-decibel or higher reduction in sound noise post wall construction. The receiver may or may not be the same as an eligible voter. The estimated cost for the wall for the stretch from Foster to Far West is $1 million, and they allocated 42 beneficiary receivers, 20 more than the number of property owners eligible to vote along that stretch. This made the cost per beneficiary receiver $23,000. Their logic is that since the wall is 20 feet high, more than

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Are Sound Walls a sound idea for Great Northern?

Continued from page 5

just those homes that line Great Northern will benefit from the noise reduction, and that therefore they can include those homes in their calculations.

The wall is being built solely to diffuse noise from MoPac, not the trains; therefore materials will be selected, and it will be designed and built for that purpose alone. The wall should soften the train noise some, but they could not predict by how much or to what extent.

The wall will be built five to six feet off of Great Northern, but this distance varies depending on where you are at on Great Northern and in some cases it will be a little closer. The thickness of the wall was estimated to be approximately 10 inches.

Ballots were mailed out to the eligible owners with a brochure for the project and a two-page letter. This letter did not include information on the height of the wall for the location where the owner's property is or the current noise level for that property and the anticipated change with the sound wall. The information was available at the meeting, and several people at the Workshop were looking up the noise (before/after) for their streets and homes.

Because the wall is being built in the City's right of way, the City Council will have the final vote as to whether the wall on Great Northern is built in that right of way.

If you were not able to go to the July 26 Gullett workshop on sound walls, you can attend the one scheduled for Bryker Woods Elementary School Cafeteria on August 18, 2011, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m. ❖

Highlights from the June and July ANA Executive Committee Meetings

Cynthia Keohane

June

Dan Diener reported a total of 403 member households.

Donna Beth McCormick reported on final plans for the Fourth of July parade.

Cynthia reported on the Planning Commission (PC) Working Group on Short Term Rentals (STRs). A number of Allandale residents are meeting with three Planning Commission members from the Codes And Ordinances committee, as well as other STR stakeholders, to draft recommended regulations for STRs. The PC representatives are Mandy Dealey, Saundra Kirk and Danette Chimenti. The three commissioners will make their own proposal if the working group does not vote out a recommendation.

July

Dan Diener reported a total of 409 member households.

Laura DiCarlo provided a report, which Cynthia read, on the planned October 1 bike rodeo at Sheffield NW Park. She requested a budget of $190, and hopes to return $90 after the event. The board agreed to this amount, using money that was budgeted, but not spent, for a Tyke and Bike event.

Cynthia appointed Diane Swinney to chair the nominating committee. Current board members not at their three-year term limit were polled about running again. Most incumbents expressed interest, but several are undecided. Kay Newell and John Keohane agreed to serve on the nominating committee and Diane will contact other potential members.

Cynthia suggested having a speaker on the Seedling Foundation, who spoke at July's Austin Neighborhood Council (ANC) meeting, at the ANA September general meeting. The Seedling Foundation is looking for mentors for a school-based mentoring program for elementary and middle school children with a parent in prison. The speaker stated that AISD has at least 5,000 students with one or both parents in prison. Approved.

Donna Beth McCormick, Kay Newell, and Tom Linehan came to the EC meeting from the Sound Walls meeting and reported on the meeting.

Rob Robinson provided an update on Short Term Rentals (STRs).

Cynthia discussed the draft ANC resolution on STRs, which she had presented at the July ANC meeting. ❖

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Living on the Street of Hard Knocks

Tom Linehan

People living along Bull Creek Road are taking one for the team. They have to live with noise, dust, and a lot of inconvenience as the storm drain improvements project, with the big trucks and heavy machinery stops, settles in, bangs around, and then moves to the next couple of houses. The project has gone on for eight months and at the time of this writing, it is stalled in the middle of the block of Bull Creek between Allandale and White Rock.

I realize there is more to the Allandale Storm Drain Improvements project than the work on Bull Creek; however, I wanted to share what it is like to be on the frontline of this project from those who live there. On paper, it is simple: the contractor is digging a trench down the middle of the street, putting in a drainage pipe, replacing the water and sewer connections to the homes, filling the trench back up, and moving forward. It has to be done and everyone understands its importance, including the people living on the streets where the work is occurring. For years, the Allandale Neighborhood Association, in response to ongoing pressure from neighbors getting flooded, has been pressing the City to address the repeated street flooding that occurs following a hard rain. A portion of the bond monies for the project was passed back in 2006; impatience was building.

Now that the project is well underway, I wonder if anyone realized the extent of the disruption the project would bring. As Brigitte Catchpole, one of the residents living on Bull Creek close to Shoal Creek who experienced the construction in front of their houses, said, "it is a huge project. It is a curb to curb operation." The machinery and equipment to get the work done takes up the full width of the street. And for the Catchpoles, that meant a little over a week of walking

Brigette Catchpole standing in concrete culvert outside of her house

through neighbors' yards to get to their cars parked at the end of the construction barriers. "You don't realize how many things you take back and forth to your car," Brigitte said, looking back on the experience. Parking and walking in people's yards for a few houses is doable for the Catchpoles; however, it is much more of a challenge for some of the older and disabled residents who live on Bull Creek in the project's path. The City does offer assistance for people with spe-

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Living on the Street of Hard Knocks

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cial needs for transportation.

For the residents like the Catchpoles who live on the two blocks of Bull Creek south of Allandale where the City has finished laying the eight-foot by six-foot concrete culverts, IT IS NOT OVER! The contractor will be back to replace the old water main that runs the length of the street. This second pass will go much more quickly but it will mean more digging and more dust and noise. The last pass will be resurfacing the street which again will involve blocked driveways, noise, and dust. When it is all over, the curb, gutter and pavement on that section of Bull Creek will be much nicer than when it all began, and hopefully that will be the end of it.

The NOISE! I moved up Bull Creek to get another person's account of what it is like to live with a massive construction project going on in front of your house. I spoke with Molly and Buckley Parks who at the time of this writing had the large machines and box culverts right there at the curb in front of their lovely, recently-built home. They are on week five with at least two more weeks to go before the project advances up the street. The Parks live on Bull Creek just north of Koenig where the construction crew has encountered rock. Running into rock in this part of the neighborhood is no surprise to those of us who live in the area. It is why I have a raised garden. Nevertheless, the contractor has encountered a lot of rock outside the Parks' house. Trying to get through the rock has increased the noise level significantly. It is also one of reasons that the project has stalled there. The other contributing factor is that this is the point where the contractor is transitioning to different pipe sizes (a single eight-foot by six-foot culvert transitioning to two seven-by-four culverts running parallel).

I say we bake a cake for the Parks and each of the families who live in the homes around this transition point. Molly says the equipment they are using to break through the rock has gotten larger and louder. Imagine a large tron-like machine banging and banging and banging away at the rock throughout the day. Add to it the noise and exhaust fumes of the large diesel trucks. I go by the street entrance almost daily in the morning and see these trucks sitting and idling on White Rock Drive waiting to move onto Bull Creek.

In spite of it all, the Parks are relatively tolerant of the project. The contractor has been very good about keeping them informed on progress and was considerate about giving them access to their driveway for as long as possible. The couple realize the importance of the project. They too will benefit from not having the street flooding. The immensity of the job and proximity of the work to their front door, however, has them monitoring for signs of foundation problems, checking for doors not opening and closing properly, and looking for cracks in their tile floors.

Molly and Buckley Parks in facing the front of their house on Bull Creek

The stress of it all! As you can read from the project update in this newsletter by Stephanie Lott, there is more to come. Get prepared for traffic delays on RM 2222 at Bull Creek on weekends when the contractor starts work on laying the box culvert across that intersection. Yes, the Allandale Storm Drain Improvements Project is a large undertaking and it cannot end soon enough. I am sure others in Allandale join me in thanking those of you with homes along the project path for putting up with all of the hassle and inconveniences of the project. You will always be granted first-in-line status in my books. ❖

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Re-Opening of the Northwest Recreation Center

Continued from front page

NW Opening 1979

A recreation center, if it is operated correctly, soon becomes the hub for activities in the community that it serves. The Northwest Recreation Center worked magic and weaved wonderful childhood memories for many youngsters. I often run into grown men and women who remember attending Miss Renee's program for young children, the many women who as little girls had their "first dance" at the "Father-Daughter Dances" held at the center, the Easter Egg Hunt which always featured a visit by the Easter Bunny, the wonderful kites made at classes conducted by the Robinsons and flown at the Zilker Kite Festival. So many memories.

The center also was the meeting location for the Allandale Neighborhood Association and when I served as President, I recall a meeting about bicycle lanes with a loud and over-flowing crowd!

Now, this renovated center is ready to continue to serve the Allandale community for many more years to come. Use it and treasure it – a recreation center is what a caring staff and community support make of it. ❖

Gloria Pennington past Pres ANA opening speech NW Rec ribbon cutting

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Allandale Storm Drain Improvements Project Update – 8/2/11

Stephanie Lott

Informal Meeting

The Project Manager, Tony Krauss, will be available for questions at the north end of the excavation on Bull Creek Road at 5:30 p.m. most Tuesdays. If you come, please stay out of the barricaded area.

Status of Box Culvert on Bull Creek Road

The contractor has resumed installing the box culverts on Bull Creek Road. The plans call for two seven-by-four-foot box culverts on Bull Creek Road up to White Horse Drive. It may take until the middle or end of September to reach White Horse Drive.

For installation of the box culvert, about 400 feet of Bull Creek Road is completely closed to traffic on a 24-hour basis. The progress depends on the amount of rock and the conflicting utility lines. For safety reasons, the closure cannot be reopened at night.

Bull Creek Road, the block between Shoal Creek Boulevard and RM 2222

Construction on the new water main and water service lines is still a few weeks away. Once construction starts on the water line, it will probably be at least a month before the contractor can begin reconstructing the street. Before the end of the project, a final overlay will be applied to the pavement.

Intersection of Bull Creek Road and RM 2222

The contractor will be laying the box culvert across this intersection with an open cut excavation as originally planned. The work will take place on weekends. Discussions have resumed about whether to close the whole intersection or to leave one west bound lane open. Shutting down the whole intersection will cost less and require fewer weekends. The work has not been scheduled yet.

Bullard Drive

We anticipate that we will begin repaving the road soon. Watershed Protection field crews may start installing the rest of the storm drain system on Rickey, Carleen and Bullard this fall. Here is a link to a map showing the work planned: *http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/watershed/downloads/fl_bullard_map.pdf.*

Greenbelt near Shoal Creek Boulevard and Bull Creek Road

The work in the greenbelt is almost complete. A handrail still needs to be installed.

More Information

Here is a link to the web site for project: *http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/watershed/flood_allandale.htm.*

The main contacts for this project are:
Jim Evans, Construction Inspector
512-974-1586
James.Evans@ci.austin.tx.us

Stephanie Lott
Public Information Specialist Senior
City of Austin
Watershed Protection Department
512-974-2799 (phone)
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Update on Short Term Rentals ordinance

Cynthia Keohane

At the July meeting of the Austin Planning Commission Codes And Ordinances (CAO) Committee, the three planning commissioners who sponsored the Short Term Rentals (STR) working group provided a written STR recommendation. A number of questions were raised by other commission members, staff, and Austin residents. The committee referred the recommendation to city staff, asking staff to provide proposed code that represents the intent of the commissioners' recommendations.

I sent the following email to the Planning Commission:

> *"On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Allandale Neighborhood Association, I thank the sponsoring commissioners of the STR working group for their recommendations report. This July 19 report to the Codes and Ordinances Committee identified critical issues and proposed solutions. We believe that the working group process ensured that all stakeholders, owner/operators, neighborhoods, and B&B owners were heard. We also want to thank the full Commission for sponsoring this working group. We look forward to continuing to work with you on this important initiative."*

Saundra Kirk presented the commissioners' recommendations at the July 27 Austin Neighborhood Council meeting.

Also at the Austin Neighborhoods Council (ANC) meeting, I presented a draft ANC resolution on Short Term Rentals, which was reviewed by the ANC Executive Committee on which I serve. The resolution emphasizes key elements, from a neighborhood perspective, of the current CAO recommendation. I explained that the resolution does not express support or opposition to the proposed ordinance because we don't know what the draft ordinance will look like when it goes to the City Council. ANC will vote on this, probably in August or September. Following is the recommendation section:

> *"Be it resolved that the Austin Neighborhoods Council supports the Planning Commissions Codes and Ordinances recommendation for new code, emphasizing these key elements:*
>
> *Short term rentals are defined as residential rentals for a duration of two-30 days.*
>
> *Business short term rentals, that is, rentals for homes that are not owner-occupied, may not operate within a 1,000 feet of another business STR or a Bed and Breakfast.*
>
> *All short term rentals must obtain a city permit.*
>
> *Business short term rentals must obtain a license, subject to periodic inspection and compliance with safety standards, neighborhood compatibility standards and setbacks.*
>
> *Business short term rental is established as a new use category, requiring application for conditional use.*
>
> *Violators will be assessed fines to the maximum extent of the law, and any license revocation requires a two-year wait time before re-applying for a license."* ❖

Fourth of July Parade Winners

Cynthia Keohane

What follows are the winners from the Fourth of July parade. Thanks to all the volunteers and participants for making this a huge success!

1. Animals - (total entries = 6)
   Daisy the guinea pig – Madison Evert-
   Bella the basset hound – Danielle Gartner
   Cuddles Honey Bunny – Callie Meyer-Barnett
2. Bikes – Group - (total entries = 6)
   Diller Girls – Hannah Diller
   Cool Chicks – Mary Parker
   Fireworks – Nicola Kay
3. Bikes – Solo - (total entries = 13)
   Mia Pardo (Wonder Woman)
   Masha Jennings
   Vitaly Jennings
4. Cars - (total entries = 3)
   Leif Allred
   Gary Wilkerson
   Ed Diettrick
5. Scooters/Skateboards - (total entries = 5)
   Greg Davis
   James and John Kennedy
   Emma Davis
6. Strollers/Trikes - (total entries = 5)
   Charlie
   Talia Wilhelm
   Josie Molner
7. Trucks - (total entries = 5)
   Kevin McHorse
   Wesley and Larry Cunningham
   Bill Stephens
8. Wagons - (total entries = 16)
   Willow and Scout Goldsmith
   Piper Lynch and Garrett Pardo
   Tim Loudermilk
9. Walkers – Groups - (total entries =5)
   Fiona Carolan
   Girl Scout Troup 1160, Lara Griffith and others
   Pablo Ruiz, Lois Ruiz (Future Mr. and Mrs. America)
10. Walkers – Solo - (total entries = 4)
    Conor Heffernan
    Kathryn Sousaras
    Ava Gray

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Parade Pics!

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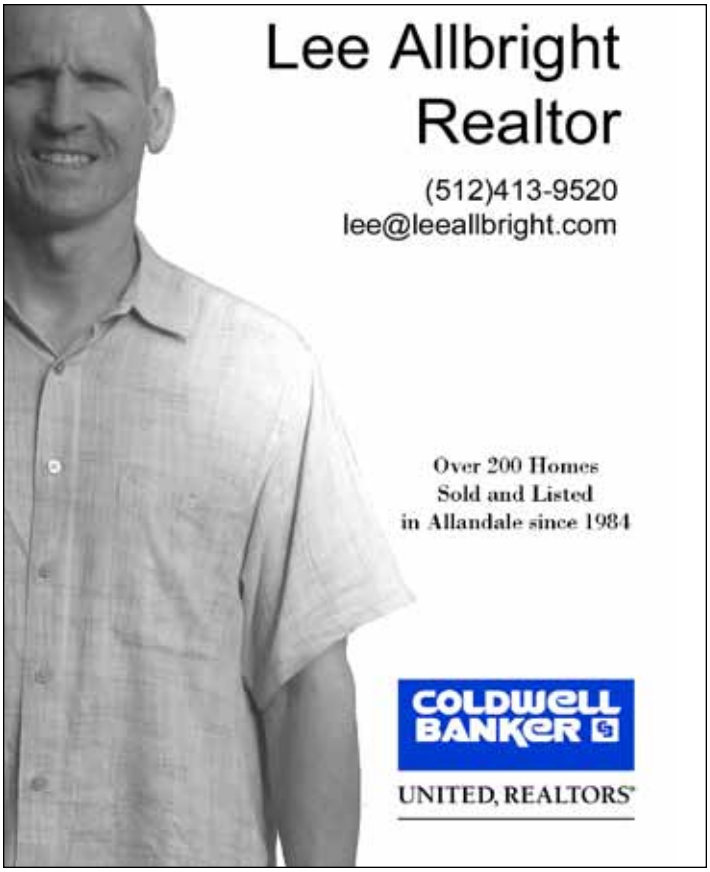
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Lamar Update

Yvonne Steckel

Good things are happening at Lamar! As you may know, we won the Fine Arts Academy designation for 2012-2013, and our band, choir, and orchestra swept UIL competitions this spring. Our visual arts students won more Junior VASE awards than any other middle school in the state. Our band has won so many awards they were featured in the most recent West Austin News.

Now, we are planning to keep this momentum going into the coming school year. Our PTA Board is near full capacity and our event planning is underway for this coming year. Our Outreach Committee held two open houses and various parent coffees at feeder elementary schools. We are reaching out to the community through Safe Routes to School, Scottie Dads, and our fabulous Fine Arts Programs.

With all the positive news, it was surprising to hear that Lamar received an Academically Unacceptable rating for 2010-2011. A small number of students in two overlapping subgroups did not pass the eighth-grade Science TAKS. That was all it took to give the entire school an Academically Unacceptable (AU) rating. Regardless of the AU rating, we are seeing a lot of improvements on the horizon with the appointment of our new interim principal.

Mr. George Llewellyn comes to us from McCallum High School where he was an assistant principal, strengthening our vertical alignment with the neighborhood high school. He spent 14 years at Bedichek Middle School, both as a teacher and an administrator. His commitment to academic rigor, expanded electives, and continued development of our Fine Arts Academy is tremendous.

While Mr. Llewellyn has only been in office for a few weeks, we are already seeing new opportunities at Lamar. New electives for the upcoming year include French, Japanese, and robotics. Lamar will be the only middle school to offer Art 1 for high school credit. He has scheduled workshops for our students with both the U.T. Fine Arts Departments and the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Dance will soon be added as we open the Fine Arts Academy in the fall of 2012. Mr. Llewellyn will ensure that our Pre-AP classes, including accelerated math, are aligned with McCallum's Pre-AP and AP classes in academic rigor. In addition, he is working closely with the PTA and Campus Advisory Council to build parent support at Lamar.

The best way to keep up with changes at Lamar is to subscribe to the weekly email called the WAAG (Week At A Glance). Subscribe by contacting *LamarWAAG@yahoogroups.com*.

We are now moving forward in great anticipation of what lies ahead. Feeder school parents and community members – we need your support and involvement more than ever. Scottie Dads, Scottie store, sports boosters, and after-school clubs are just a few of the new opportunities for volunteers. Whether you have a lot of time to commit or just an hour a month, we need your help to keep the momentum going. Let us know how you can help or if you have questions.

Help us make Lamar the best neighborhood school in the district!

Yvonne Steckel
ydarrahsteckel@gmail.com
Lamar PTA president
Parent Outreach Committee
Lamar Middle School ❖

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Atown: A New Boutique on Burnet Road

Laura Dooley

Atown storefront

The stretch of Burnet Road between 2222 and North Loop is fast becoming my favorite part of town. There are unique places to eat, drink, dance, exercise, and paint. I've been anxiously watching the space at the corner of Burnet and Shoalmont, wondering what new Burnet treasure was taking shape. Now that "Atown an Austin Lifestyle Store" has opened, a cool new boutique has been added to the ranks. The bright orange exterior promised something special inside, and when it opened last month, I was not disappointed!

The first thing you notice when walking in to Atown is the size of the store. If you've been in Allandale for a while, you might remember Cierra, the rustic furniture store formerly in this location. Atown has taken over the space in a big way, filling four rooms with a variety of unique finds.

On my first visit, I was warmly welcomed by Jenni Charles. She's the store manager, and explained that the store is owned by the same local folks who own Blue Elephant boutique and The Beauty Store Salon and Spa. Jenni told me that Atown "caters to the Austin lifestyle as a whole." Exploring the four spacious rooms, you'll notice that potential birthday, anniversary, housewarming, baby shower, and "just-because" gifts are abundant.

Once you've made your gift selection and had it gift-wrapped (complimentary!) you can consider buying something cool for yourself. There's a ton of fun jewelry; I was intrigued by the chunky, funky bracelets and simple silver strands. There's a wide selection of women's clothing, including pretty dresses, tees, and skirts. There's a smaller selection of menswear, but Jenni said that's an area that, along with home goods, she's looking to expand.

"Buy Local" is a common catchphrase these days, and to that end Atown does not disappoint. The store carries locally-made clothing, jewelry, stationery, soap, hair clips, paintings, notebooks, and photographs. However, in addition to the

Inside Atown

local goods, you'll also find well-known national brands on the shelves.

In this heat, you might think twice about getting out to shop in the afternoon. It's worth it at Atown, though; a complimentary cookie and glass of wine might convince you to stop by.

There's a grand opening event planned for the evening of Friday, September 9 from 5:00-9:00 p.m., and it sounds like it'll be a blast. Tacos, ice cream, cupcakes, and adult beverages will be offered, and there will be a DJ and hairstylist on site.

If you can't make it that night, stop by on the third Wednesday of the month for one of their "Shop and Listen Local" events featuring live music.

Welcome to the neighborhood, Atown!

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Neighborhood Watch

Laura DiCarlo

Before I report on the crimes that have occurred since the last newsletter, I'd like to remind everyone that National Night Out (NNO), which is held nationally in August but is always the first Tuesday in October in Austin due to the heat, will take place on October 4. Block captains are turning in applications now so that you all can enjoy parties with visits from EMS, police, and fire fighters. Please let your block captain know if you would like to host the party on your street.

During the month of June burglary of vehicles occurred in the 5700 block of Woodview, the 5200 block of Shoal Creek, the 6300 block of Shoal Creek West, and the 2200 block of 49th Street. In one of these instances the car doors were left unlocked and a suitcase was showing. The contents were recovered, but the theft probably would have been avoided if valuables had not been visible and the doors had been locked. June Burglary of residences (BORs) occurred in the 3200 block of Stardust, the 6700 block of Shoal Creek, and the 2600 block of 49th Street. There were also thefts in the 7700 block of Shoal Creek and the 7000 block of Daugherty. In one of these cases a GPS was stolen. Visible GPSs or associated cords are enticing to a would-be perpetrator. As many of you on the Listserve heard about, there was a stalker on Placid Place, and the resident involved is working with police to investigate.

There have been no July BOVs at the writing of this article (August 29) (Yay!) but BORs occurred in the 6200 block of Shoal Creek West, the 4700 block of Placid Place, the 2700 block of Geraghty. Thefts occurred in the 3100 block of White Rock and the 5000 block of Woodview. Many of you may have heard about the Geraghty and Placid Place burglaries as they were posted and discussed on the Listserve. Here is part of the account from the Geraghty resident's son:

"... happened last Friday 7-15, at about 2:45 pm. I stopped by [my Mom's house on Geraghty] that afternoon and saw she was not home. I went inside to wait for her to arrive. I heard footsteps at the back of the house and when I went to check it out I found a young man stuffing a backpack with my Mom's things. I asked him what he was doing and he told me he was 'just looking around'. When I reached for my cell phone to call 911 he pushed me aside and ran out the front door. I ran after him and realized before I got to the end of the front walk that there was no way I could catch him. I ran to my truck parked on Vine and took off down Geraghty but I did not see him again. While I was driving down the street I got 911 on the phone. They had the police enroute very quickly and at my Mom's house within about 5 minutes. We never did see the guy again. He was not at the house long so he was not able to fill a laundry bag he left behind. I was not seriously injured during these events and luckily it was me and not my Mom who walked in on him..."

The victim provided the listserve with a description of the assailant: a little over six feet tall, about 220 pounds, short black hair, light com-

plected, early 20s, white tennis shoes, shorts, nondescript shirt, no facial hair or tats or piercings, just a clean-cut looking guy. He had a small dark colored backpack with the very back of it being red or bright pink. The victim noted, when asked, that he looked Hispanic.

The Placid Place burglary involved perpetrators kicking in the front door while people were home in houses all around. Please put three-inch screws in the strike plates of all of the doors to your home it hardens the target by making it much harder to kick in the door. Most Allandale homes have tiny screws in the doors and with one or two kicks a door can be opened and then quickly closed so burglars are in and no one realizes. It takes 15-20 kicks to get in when screws are three inches, and after a few futile kicks most burglars will move on.

I focus on the residential area of Allandale so I usually don't report burglaries and thefts that occur at 2525 Anderson Lane as this address is the parking lot and stores surrounding Walmart. However, I want to make sure that people realize every month at least two or three incidents occur at this address – shoplifting, burglary of vehicle, etc. Purses and parcels as well as computers and other valuables are often stolen from shopping center parking lots so always be vigilant – this is not a Walmart issue but something true in shopping center parking lots throughout the city and country.

Patrols have noticed that many people are leaving their garage doors open, which unfortunately is an invitation to take bicycles, tools, etc. I know we should be able to work in our back yard while the garage is up in front, but the bottom line is that safe is better than sorry. Please close your garage door if you are not going to be physically present in the front of your home.

Please let me know if you would like information about becoming a block captain or patrol member, as I have trainings frequently and can schedule them at an individual's convenience.

An upcoming event to look for – a bike rodeo on October 1 at 9:00-11:00 a.m. in the NW Park parking lot. Watch the Listserve for more information.

Laura DiCarlo
Allandale Neighborhood Association
Safety Chair/neighborhood Watch Coordinator
lhdicarlo@yahoo.com
323-6929 ❖

Neighborhood Challenge - Wildlife Habitat

by Joi Chevalier

This is an annual contest run by the Austin Parks and Recreation Department, where the City of Austin, the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), and the Audubon Society challenge Austin's neighborhoods to make Austin a more wildlife-friendly city. Prizes are awarded to the three neighborhoods certifying the most new wildlife habitats between April 15 and November 15, 2011, and the next four-week training starts in September. The Allandale Neighborhood Association

Continued on page 20

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Neighborhood Challenge

Continued from page 19

(ANA) won second place several years ago! For more information on beautifying your property as a wildlife habitat while becoming a certified Wildlife Habitat Steward, contact Joi Chevalier at kitjer@snikte.net for the ANA form, contact Austin Parks and Recreation at 512 974-4009, or email at wildlife@ci.austin.tx.us.

Beautify Allandale and certify yourself at the same time! ❖

Why are Leaves Dropping from the Trees?

Ginger Soule'

During the terrible drought of the 1950s, my family lived in Temple, Texas which was dependent on water from the Leon River. The Leon dried up to the point that both Belton and Temple were almost entirely dependent on water trucked in from Waco to Temple and Austin to Belton. This was the impetus for creating Lake Belton and Stillhouse Hollow Lake and the Highland Lakes chain. These reservoirs were intended to provide water to our areas for at least 50 years. Folks, both these water collection areas are about at their limits for providing us water during droughts.

Do you wonder why we have more leaf drop from our trees than usual? Trees have a unique strategy for coping with both excess water and severe drought. The undersides of all plant leaves have tiny "mouth-like" openings called stomata. Transpiration of moisture and oxygen out of the plant as well as absorption of air-borne moisture occurs through the stomata. This is why foliar feeding of plants includes spraying the undersides of leaves, not just the top side where less absorption occurs. When we have hours or days of rain, as in Sept 2009, water drives oxygen out of the open spaces in the soil. Trees and plants need access to oxygen. When they can't get enough, their strategy is to put on as many leaves as possible, pump the water out of the ground and transpire it out through their stoma. Clever no? During drought, they use the reverse strategy. By dropping excess leaves, they can prevent loss of water and conserve what is left in the ground.

For now, water deeply on your "water days," encouraging roots to grow as deep into the soil as possible. Occasionally you may need to hand water to save something that is struggling, but frequent shallow watering actually works against you as it encourages roots to stay shallow where they are more vulnerable when topsoil dries out. Along with watering, mulch sufficiently where appropriate. Let's hope we can preserve as many as possible of our neighborhood's many wonderful mature shade trees. ❖

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Gullett Good News

Stephanie Schulz

Exemplary Geckos Maintain High Test Standards, Again

The Gullett Geckos are exemplary … again. For the seventh year in a row, our students scored at the top of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Test. TEA rated Gullett exemplary, the highest possible ranking.

According to Gullett Principal Janie Ruiz, the school will keep that label for the next two years, as the district shifts over to the new STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness) Test. STAAR will replace the TAKS, which has been in place since 2003.

Back to School Blues

The summer holiday of hundreds of Gullett students is about to come to an end. To ease Gullett kids back into the swing of things, the Geckos will gather at Playland Skate on August 18 at 6 p.m. There, the students will get to see the class lists and find out which of their friends will be in their classrooms during the upcoming year. The next day, the Geckos will meet their teachers at a short event on campus. Kids meet, greet, and unpack supplies any time from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

"It's a fun day and kids really get excited about coming back to school," said Lisa Alverson, PTA president. "It's also a great time for parents to sign up for volunteer posts. We're always looking for new faces to help on PTA committees, and teachers love to have homeroom parent volunteers."

After the last, hot weekend of the summer, kids will get back into the routine of reading, writing and arithmetic – and many other subjects – starting Monday, August 22. They'll attend two full weeks of school and then have a day off for Labor Day on Sept. 7.

District Budget Slows Staffing, Scheduling

At press time, Gullett administrators still were unsure of their staffing and scheduling. On August 1, Principal Ruiz said that the district had yet to formalize changes regarding teacher movement and the master schedule. "How the district decides to staff Gullett will affect room assignments and schedules," she said.

Habla Espanol

This fall, Gullett is launching its extracurricular Spanish program. Students can participate in this weekly fun-filled program before or after school. Spanish Program co-chairs Evelin Vorzimmer, Imelda Stoebner and Amy Strong spent many hours over the summer interviewing candidates and hiring a qualified teacher to lead the Spanish program, with its new timing twist. Each grade level will be assigned a day, and students can decide to attend before or after school. Siblings can attend Spanish together.

Save the Date

October 29 may seem like a long time away, but it will be here before you can say: Carnival! Yes, the Geckos' fall carnival will be Saturday, Oct. 29 from 12-4 p.m. It's a fun event, made complete with food, games, music and friends.

Continued on page 22

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Gullett Good News

Continued from page 21

Important Dates:
August 18: Playland Skate Night, 6:30 p.m.
August 19: Meet-the-Teacher, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.
August 20: Grounds workday, 8 a.m.
August 22: School Starts
August 27: All School Pool Party, NW Pool, 3 p.m.
September 5: Labor Day Holiday
September 15: Back to School Night 6 p.m. (K-2) and 7:30 p.m. (3-5)
September 30: Family Fun Movie Night, 6:30 p.m.
October 10: School Holiday
October 29: Gullett Fall Carnival, noon ❖

Letters to the Editor:
Submit newsletter ideas, stories, and reactions to articles to allandaleneighbor@gmail.com

Dog Talk: Dogs and the Heat

Cheryl Silver

This article is squarely aimed at getting folks to stop putting their dogs at risk through exercise in the extreme heat we have been experiencing. I have written about this on our neighborhood Listserv but I know many do not participate in that venue so I hope to reach them with this article.

Remember: This heat can kill your dog. Yes, it can happen to your dog—don't believe that your dog will be the exception. Your dog counts on you to keep her safe. Like a two-year old child, your dog does not understand the implications of exertion in extreme temperatures.

Think: Your dog gives you a signal when she wants to go out and potty; what is the signal she gives you to tell you she is in physical distress while out in the heat? Does your dog have to collapse before you take notice? Do you recognize the signs that your dog is struggling due to the heat? Do you know what to do immediately when your dog refuses to walk any further or when your dog collapses? When your dog collapses, can you carry your dog to a setting where immediate intervention can begin?

Recently I was contacted by a neighbor whose five-year old dog succumbed to heatstroke because the neighbor did not understand the appropriate interventions. Also, a friend on her way to my home saw a dog collapse while out with his person on Shoal Creek Boulevard. They were able to load the dog (about 70 pounds) into my friend's car and get the woman and dog home where my friend instructed her on how to carefully cool down the dog's body. Two weeks ago I saw a woman running a dog along Shoal Creek Boulevard; I could tell the dog was in distress because of the panting and salivating. The woman talked to me after I got her attention; she had been hired to run the dog and the dog was struggling. She didn't understand the signs of danger that the dog was manifesting. It is critical that you inform yourself of the signs of heatstroke and that you take heed of

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them. Even better, be proactive and do not put your dog in the position of experiencing heatstroke.

Go on line and do a search on "cooling overheated pets" or talk to your vet to inform yourself fully. I will not go into great detail because this must be handled with great care; the five-year old mentioned above likely died due to the owner not understanding the risks of cooling the dog down without monitoring the rectal temperature every three minutes. The dog's internal temperature fell precipitously to 90 degrees and could not be raised; internal bleeding began and all systems shut down. Normal temperature for a dog is between 101and 102 degrees.

If you would like me to send you a good link about signs of heatstroke in your dog and about cooling down your pet, send me a note at *csilver2@austin.rr.com*.

Keep in mind that your dog would never intentionally go out and exercise in this heat. Their bodies do not cool as efficiently as ours do. Leave your dog at home while you go out in the heat. Instead, take your dog for a ride or; take your dog to an outing at Lowe's or Home Depot late in the evening while the stores are not too busy. Visit video stores. Put your dog's kibble in plastic bottles and let the dog knock the bottle around to shake the food out. Play games with your dog in the house like jumping through a hula hoop and catching items tossed in the air and don't forget to train, train, train. Mental stimulation and challenges are tiring and are fun for your dog. To find some wonderful ideas for trick training go to Youtube.com and search on "kikopup." I believe this woman is among the best in terms of positive training presented in an easily understandable style.

This afternoon I saw a man in a local park throwing a frisbee repeatedly to his black dog. The man stood in the shade; it was over 100 degrees. The dog was panting, unaware that it was being put at risk. I cynically thought that the man should put on a fur jacket, stand/run around in the sun and get a sense of the impact of today's heat on his dog.

If you would like to talk about other exercise options for your dog, contact me. Now, go hug your dog. ❖

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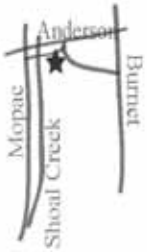

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